

May 31, 2007

Meeting Notes- Land Use Committee

1. Committee members present: Jennifer Gerber, Chuck Roady, Kerry Finley, Turner Askew, Myrt Webb, Karen Reeves, Velvet Phillips-Sullivan
2. Opening Comments – Myrt reminded the committee that we are about at the end of our data collection phase and we need to move on to findings and conclusions in our next meetings.

The committee was reminded of the task force meeting on 7 June. At the meeting we will give a brief description of our progress and the data we have collected.

3. There were no changes to the agenda
4. Tom Reynolds, County GIS, brought in a .pdf file that the committee requested. Tom demonstrated the file that has over 20 data layers on Flathead County. The layers include, septic and well locations, fire risk areas, water bodies, groundwater, roads, public lands, city limits and jurisdiction areas, terrain relief and fire district areas.

The committee was very impressed with Tom's work and there was general agreement that this GIS file will be valuable as the committee works on the task force report.

Myrt will make copies of the file and mail them to committee members.

5. Marilyn Wood, Executive Director of the Flathead Land Trust joined the meeting to talk about conservation tools which include conservation easements. Important points of the discussion were:
 - Montana is a leader in conservation with 1.5 million acres protected
 - There are 11 land trusts in the state that work with federal and state agencies to protect land with conservation value.
 - Some of the conservation myths are that easements reduce property taxes, adversely impact local government, reduce land value, are so restrictive that a land owner cannot use the land for any economic activity or improvement.
 - Easements are voluntary agreements between a land owner and a non profit or public entity. The land owner agrees to give up development rights for cash, tax credits or both. Some easements are donated.
 - Easements are expensive to complete and to monitor.
 - Recent easement activity in the Flathead shows that the difference between land with development rights and without these rights is decreasing. Easements often increase the value of adjoining lands.
 - Other conservation tools are: use of cluster development, land owner assistance centers and transfer of development right (TDR) programs.
 - TDR's are complex arrangements where a developer can get increased density in one area in exchange for an easement in another area.

6. The next meeting will be 14 June

